SAFETY STEPS: ESSENTIAL MESSAGES FOR WORK AT HEIGHT!

Safety Steps' is designed to help all those who produce outputs that are aimed at maintaining and improving safety during work at height (WAH), for the following audiences:

- designers
- clients
- managers (those managing WAH)
- supervisors*, and
- operatives*

Safety Steps is an *enabling* document. It provides essential messages that can be used - in whole or part - by those who aim to produce any type of output for these five target audiences. As such (with the possible exception of information for designers) is not designed to be deployed directly to these target audiences (*though the Safety Steps for Supervisors and Operatives are written in the first person, so that the content can be more easily adapted for other use in further outputs and communication channels).

As such, outputs derived from/informed by Safety Steps may include (and are not restricted to):

- Flow charts/infographics
- Training materials
- Toolbox talks/checklists
- Poster/sticker campaigns
- Rules and guidelines

Safety Steps covers *general information* on WAH rather than task-specific aspects. So, for example, the messages don't provide information about specific situations such as the use of scaffolding or mobile work platforms or working on roofs. However, the general information provided underpins any, more specific, WAH messages and information.

User comments

Safety Steps will be reviewed by CONIAC from time to time, to ensure that the general messages and other information continues to be suitable for the purpose above. If you have any comments on Safety Steps (including suggestions for changes, noting the intended purpose above) please contact: https://accessindustryforum.org.uk/safety-steps/feedback/

Work at height (WAH): Safety Steps for...

1. CLIENTS

All clients need to consider the safety of WAH activity carried out by contractors on the client's premises/sites, whether the contractor is an organization or an individual. A client should appoint a contractor which has sufficient skills, knowledge and experience to do the job safely. Clients who aim to carry out in-house WAH, or otherwise take a direct managing role in WAH, are also advised to refer to the 'Managing WAH' Safety Steps.
Effective Communication Clients who require WAH to be carried out by a contractor must communicate and co-operate with the lead contractor, and where necessary co-ordinate activities linked to the WAH, to ensure the safety of those working at height, and others (including the public). The amount of communication, co-ordination and co-operation required will depend on the risks and complexity of the WAH activity.

1a. Essential contacts

- Nominate someone who can communicate effectively with the lead main contractor on WAH activity
- Identify the contractor's lead contact – the person responsible for managing the WAH
- Clarify and agree who will be making design/planning decisions regarding the WAH
- Clarify and agree who will be supervising (in day to day charge of) the WAH and checking any WAH safety equipment.

1b. Communicating essential site-specific information

Examples of evidence that should be sought by the client:

- that WAH is being planned and supervised by those who have sufficient skills, knowledge and experience to ensure safety
- that the work will follow client safety rules or standards, and safe working permits, regarding WAH
- that any sub-contractors will be suitably managed, in line with the above
- a site-specific risk assessment and a Safe System of Work

Examples of what the client should make available:

- any relevant WAH permits, rules or standards
- site safety-related information e.g. fragile roofs, difficult access, unprotected edges, confined spaces, electrical or other services, holes in floor
- any pertinent information about safety equipment being provided (e.g. anchor or previous equipment test information)
- any changes (e.g. to the work environment) that will affect the Safe System of Work (SSoW)

Considerations The following steps should be considered when reviewing the SSoW (which may include a method statement, WAH management plan and/or the relevant parts of a Construction Phase Plan (if needed)	**Enabling control of risk** Apply the step-wise approach (as shown in left-hand column) to controlling the risk from WAH, where reasonably practicable	**Examples may include:**
1. Avoid working at height	Consider whether it is reasonably practicable for the project/task to be carried out another way, other than by WAH If so, enable the work to be carried out other than by WAH (e.g. from the ground)	• Working from ground level: - Using extendable tools - Assemble or work on components / equipment and lift into place • Using emerging and other technologies (e.g. drones)
2. Enable practical planning for safe work at height Ensure there is a site-specific risk assessment (RA) and SSoW, before WAH starts. Consider any risks to those who may be passing below the WAH	Provide and obtain essential site-specific information (*see previous examples in 1b*) before the work starts Cooperate with: • the application of risk control measures • any required changes in risk controls, as a result of changes to the risk assessment (RA).	Plan to ensure (as necessary): • Cordoning off of the work area • Protection/segregation of the public from the work area • Means of evacuation and rescue • An effective permit to work system
3. Fall prevention	Identify and utilize an existing safe place of work. Provide suitable access to any existing safe place of work	• Suitable, robust working platform/area • Defined access points • Fixed guard rails, e.g. around plant, machinery, excavations/ holes • Parapet wall
4. Preventing falls through providing collective protection	As required, enable the provision of suitable collective protection	• Scaffolding • Temporary edge protection • Platform decking • Mobile towers • MEWPs
5. Preventing falls through providing personal protection	If required, enable access to any secure points for a work restraint/travel restriction system	• Fixed length lanyards/harnesses • Horizontal anchor line systems

6. Minimizing the distance and/or consequences of a fall using collective protection	If required, enable the provision of suitable collective protection	• High safety netting • Airbags or soft-landing systems
7. Minimize the distance of a fall using personal protection	If required, enable the provision of personal protective equipment.	• Industrial rope access e.g. working on a building façade • Personal fall arrest system with secure anchor points.
8. Monitoring Ongoing communication with those managing WAH	Ongoing communication (which may include checks) with those managing WAH, regarding: • ongoing risk controls • any changes to risk controls, as a result of changes during the WAH	• Regular communication with the lead contractor • Advising lead contractor of any issues that may affect the risk or controls • Regular reports by lead contractor

Ensure (when the client can influence or control the following) ...

- working areas are kept clear (good site housekeeping)
- areas where access equipment will be placed/attached are stable and strong enough for use
- that there is sufficient site security
- workers can get safely to and from where they will work at height
- that any client-provided WAH safety equipment is:
  1) tested or inspected as necessary,
  2) fit for purpose, and
  3) not damaged, and that
- any damaged equipment (or any equipment with unauthorized modifications) will be withdrawn, replaced or repaired, as necessary to ensure safety
- that sufficient time has been allocated for the WAH.

Client

Further sources of information for clients

HSE: Using Contractors (INDG368)

Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015 - and guide to the Regulations (LI53): Client duties